

Sleep

Even smartphone screens impact kids' sleep, study finds

Meghan Holohan For tweens who got a tablet or smartphone for the holidays, their new bedtime routine may involve Netflix helping them doze off. But don't think that's better than watching TV before bed. A new study finds that even **small-screen devices interrupt children's sleep**.

8 hours ago

Experts have known that a flickering TV in the bedroom cuts into children's sleep time. A researcher at the University of California, Berkeley wondered if small screens, such as those found on tablets and smartphones, influenced children's sleep, too.

"Much less is known about new forms of media, like smartphones," says Jennifer Falbe, lead author of the study, which appears in the journal *Pediatrics*. "[They] have the potential to impact sleep, perhaps to a greater degree than traditional media."

Falbe studied results from the Massachusetts Childhood Obesity Research Demonstration, where 2,048 fourth-and seventh-grade students answered questions about their sleep and TV, smartphone, and tablet habits.

What the new research found:

- Children who dozed off near a small screen said they slept 20.6 minutes less than their peers who snoozed away from electronic devices.
- More importantly, children attached to small screens complained of interrupted sleep, something that even those who watched loads of TV or slept with a TV in the room did not admit to feeling.
- Those who were lulled to sleep by a TV admitted to 18 fewer minutes a sleep.
- Children who spent a lot of time during the day watching TV or videos or playing videogames also reported sleeping less.

The study didn't look at why small screens impact sleep, but Falbe says a few factors play a role.

"While any type of light can suppress melatonin release, blue light emitted from electronics has a stronger impact on melatonin release," she says. "Content can be engaging and emotionally arousing."

While children may treat tablets and smartphones like another appendage, experts say there are ways to stop them from migrating to the bedroom.

"[Smart phones and tablets] are robbing the kid of the nightly routine of how to go to bed and get to sleep," says Michele Borba, a parenting expert and TODAY Parents contributor.

She believes children need to learn how to fall asleep without help from electronics and recommends that phones and tablets are worked into the nighttime routine. Children will soon know that they can't use electronics a half hour before bed.

Parenting expert **Dr. Deborah Gilboa** takes it one step further: parents should keep all chargers in their bedrooms and tell their children they must "park" their devices in their rooms. The ping of a text will no longer cause a child to spring from bed to check a phone or tablet.

"Kids genuinely believe ... communication is actually that urgent," says Gilboa. "Every one of those messages feels impossible to ignore."

The Exact Time You Should Go To Bed



Melissa Walker December 30, 2014

While everyone's sleep needs are a little bit different, there is a simple trick to help you figure out your perfect bedtime. (Photo: Getty Images)

Blackout blinds, white-noise machines, prescription medication — we'll try a lot of tricks to get a full night's sleep. Studies show that sleep is critical for our moods, our minds, and our overall health, and we just plain feel better after a good rest. But how do we know if we've gotten that ever-elusive "right amount" of sleep? It turns out that there's a science to doing it well.

"There is absolutely a right time to go to bed," says [Michael Breus](#), PhD, a board-certified sleep specialist and author of [Good Night: The Sleep Doctor's 4-Week Program to Better Sleep and Better Health](#). That right time is unique to each individual Breus tells Yahoo Health, but there's a formula that will help you figure out your own magic hour.

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"The average sleep cycle is 90 minutes long, and the average human has five of those sleep cycles per night," explains Breus. That means we all need around 7.5 hours of shuteye — he says the [8-hour advice](#) touted everywhere is a myth. (While 7.5 is a good center gauge for most people, [everyone's sleep needs are slightly different](#), with some people needing more or less sleep than others.)

So how to get your 7.5 in? "Work backward from your wake-up time," says Breus. "That's socially determined by when you have to get up to get to work, get the kids ready, all those external factors." So if you have to get up by 6:30 a.m., count back 7.5 hours and recognize that your bedtime should be 11 p.m.

“Follow that bedtime for 10 days in a row,” says Breus, “and you’ll begin, quite naturally, to wake up a few minutes before your alarm clock sounds.” It’s key, he stresses, to be consistent — that’s how the human circadian system functions best. “Sleeping in on the weekends causes your system to shift and makes you want to go to bed later and wake up later,” he says. That’s one reason why Monday mornings can feel so difficult — Breus calls that bedraggled feeling “social jet lag.”

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But what about people who say they can’t fall asleep at 11 p.m., for example? “It’s all about the wake-up time,” insists Breus. “I don’t care if you can’t fall asleep at 11 p.m. initially. If you are consistent about getting up at 6:30 a.m. every morning, your body will adjust.”

Here are three easy things you can do to improve your zzs:

1. Set a nighttime alarm. If you have to go to bed at 11 p.m., set your alarm for 10:30 p.m. and it’ll remind you to get ready for bed so you’ll meet your nocturnal deadline. If you’re consistent about waking time, a morning alarm will become unnecessary, says Breus.

2. If you work with a computer all day, try *f.lux*. It’s a program that makes the brightness of your screen adapt to the time — warm at night, and brighter, like sun, during the day. It’s especially great for late-night work, because if you check your computer at midnight, you don’t want to be looking at a bright screen. (You can use the app for your phone too.)

3. As soon as possible after you wake up, get into the sunshine. Whether that means reading the newspaper out on the patio or standing by a window as you sip your coffee for 15 minutes, soaking up a bit of sunshine will reset your circadian clock and help your body’s natural sleeping-waking rhythm.

<https://www.yahoo.com/health/the-exact-time-you-should-go-to-bed-105884199477.html>



What Sleep Is and Why All Kids Need It

Sleep is more important than you may think. Can you think of a time when you didn't get enough sleep? That heavy, groggy feeling is awful and, when you feel that way, you're not at your best. So if you're not too tired, let's talk about sleep.

Why You Need Sleep

The average kid has a busy day. There's school, taking care of your pets, running around with friends, going to sports practice or other activities, and doing your homework. By the end of the day, your body needs a break. Sleep allows your body to rest for the next day.

Everything that's alive needs sleep to survive. Even your dog or cat curls up for naps. Animals sleep for the same reason you do — to give your body a tiny vacation.

Your Brain Needs Zzzzzs

Your body and your brain need sleep. Though no one is exactly sure what work the brain does when you're sleeping, some scientists think that the brain sorts through and stores information, replaces chemicals, and solves problems while you snooze.

Most kids between 5 and 12 get about 9.5 hours a night, but experts agree that most need 10 or 11 hours each night. Sleep is an individual thing and some kids need more than others.

When your body doesn't have enough hours to rest, you may feel tired or cranky, or you may be unable to think clearly. You might have a hard time following directions, or you might have an argument with a friend over something really stupid. A school assignment that's normally easy may feel impossible, or you may feel clumsy playing your favorite sport or instrument.

One more reason to get enough sleep: If you don't, you may not grow as well. That's right, researchers believe too little sleep can affect growth and your immune system — which keeps you from getting sick.

The Stages of Sleep

As you're drifting off to sleep, it doesn't seem like much is happening . . . the room is getting fuzzy and your eyelids feel heavier and heavier. But what happens next? A lot!

Your brain swings into action, telling your body **how** to sleep. As you slowly fall asleep, you begin to enter the five different stages of sleep:

Stage 1

In this stage of light sleep, your body starts to feel a bit drowsy. You can still be woken up easily during this stage. For example, if your sister pokes you or you hear a car horn outside, you'll probably wake up right away.

Stage 2

After a little while, you enter stage 2, which is a slightly deeper sleep. Your brain gives the signal to your muscles to relax. It also tells your heart to beat a little slower and your breathing to slow down. Even your body temperature drops a bit.

Stage 3

When you're in this stage, you're in an even deeper sleep, also called slow-wave sleep. Your brain sends a message to your blood pressure to get lower. Your body isn't sensitive to the temperature of the air around you, which means that you won't notice if it's a little hot or cold in your room. It's much harder to be awakened when you're in this stage, but some people may sleepwalk or talk in their sleep at this point.

Stage 4

This is the deepest sleep yet and is also considered slow-wave sleep. It's very hard to wake up from this stage of sleep, and if you do wake up, you're sure to be out of it and confused for at least a few minutes. Like they do in stage 3, some people may sleepwalk or talk in their sleep when going from stage 4 to a lighter stage of sleep.

R.E.M.

R.E.M. stands for rapid eye movement. Even though the muscles in the rest of your body are totally relaxed, your eyes move back and forth very quickly beneath your eyelids. The R.E.M. stage is when your heart beats faster and your breathing is less regular. This is also the stage when people dream!

While you're asleep, you repeat stages 2, 3, 4, and R.E.M. about every 90 minutes until you wake up in the morning. For most kids, that's about four or five times a night. Who said sleep was boring?

Dream a Little Dream

You're walking down the street and you pass a monkey eating a donut. Suddenly you're in school — but why does your teacher have such big teeth?

No, this isn't a scene from a scary movie — it's a dream!

People dream during R.E.M. sleep, the period that follows the deepest stage of sleep. Everybody has dreams, although some people have a tough time remembering them. When you wake up can affect whether you can remember your dreams. If you wake up during R.E.M. sleep, you might remember everything about your dream. If you wake up during another stage of sleep, you might not remember a thing.

No one knows for sure why people dream. Many scientists today think that dreams are linked to how our brains organize memories and emotions. Some scientists think that dreams are your brain's way of making sense of what happened during the day. Others think that dreams allow your brain to sort through the events of the day, storing the important stuff and getting rid of the junk. Some scientists say that dreams are a clue to what you're worried about or thinking about.

How to Catch Your ZZZs

For most kids, sleeping comes pretty naturally. Here are some tips to help you catch all the ZZZs you need:

- Try to go to bed at the same time every night; this helps your body get into a routine.
- Follow a bedtime routine that is calming, such as taking a warm bath or reading.
- Limit foods and drinks that contain caffeine. These include some sodas and other drinks, like ice tea.

- Don't have a TV in your room. Research shows that kids who have one in their rooms sleep less. If you have a TV, turn it off when it's time to sleep.
- Don't watch scary TV shows or movies close to bedtime because these can sometimes make it hard to fall asleep.
- Don't exercise just before going to bed. Do exercise earlier in the day — it helps a person sleep better.
- Use your bed just for sleeping — not doing homework, reading, playing games, or talking on the phone. That way, you'll train your body to associate your bed with sleep.

If you have a hard time falling asleep for more than one or two nights or have worries that are keeping you from sleeping, tell your mom or dad. They can help you solve your sleep problems. In fact, just talking about it with them could help you relax just enough (yawn) that you'll be ready to sleep. Zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz.

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How Your Smartphone Messes with Your Brain—and Your Sleep

By Josh Fischman | May 20, 2014 |  9

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It's not the Angry Birds, streaming videos, emails from your boss, or your Facebook updates that disturb your sleep when you spend an evening staring at your smartphone or tablet. OK, the apps can keep you glued to your screen until the wee hours, and that doesn't help. But it is the specific type of light from that screen that is throwing off your natural sleep-wake cycles, even after you power down. In a new video from *Reactions: Everyday Chemistry*, a sleep researcher explains the eerie power of blue light over your brain.

Cells at the back of your eyes pick up particular light wavelengths and, with a light-sensitive protein called [melanopsin](#), signal the brain's master clock, which controls the body's circadian rhythms. Blue light, which in nature is most abundant in the morning, tells you to get up and get moving. Red light is more common at dusk and it slows you down. Now, guess what kind of light is streaming from that little screen in your hand at 11:59 P.M.? "Your iPad, your phone, your computer emit large quantities of blue light," says sleep researcher and chemist Brian Zoltowski of Southern Methodist University

The results of staring at them are tiresomely predictable. Think about that when you are tossing and turning in bed a few hours later. And tomorrow night, try shutting down earlier. Let us know what happens in your comments below, too.



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